

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Short corrugated quills

= 168 Nos. 40 grams.

Long corrugated quills = 64 Nos. 71 grams.

4. Unbanded (one colour quills on the back).

a) All Red

Maximum length = 14 cm.

Minimum length = 5 cm.

Average length = 9 cm.

Total number = 110

Weight = 31 grams.

b) All white

26 cm.

5 cm.

15 cm.

50

8 grams.

5. Quills under tail:

The petal like cupules are tubular some with cups. These appears like "elongated stemless wine glasses" produce a sort of clapping sound like that of a rattel. Colour of all the nine quills were orange or reddish orange. Short spines of reddish or blackish red colour were spread all over the body.

Maximum length = 9 cm.

Minimum length = 5 cm.

Average length = 6 cm.

Total number = 11

Weight = 2 grams.

6. Quills all over the body above 3 cm.

Total 64 Nos. 71 gms.

Havilike spines — Weight 14 grams.

Total — 928.

These quills are kept in the museum of the wildlife Warden, Kalakad Sanctuary, Tirunelveli-11.

From the present evidences of distribution temporal frequency of fallen quills and the following observations are made.

1. The Red Porcupine occurs also in areas which do not have a red or orange ground colour.
2. The red colouring of quill is not a seasonal factor.
3. A very small percentage of black and white banded quills, all white and all red quills were found on the back of the animals.
4. The all white and all red quills are arranged in such a way so as to form red and white bands on the body of the animal.
5. Evidences of red Porcupine have not been found in other parts of Kalakad Sanctuary, Mundanthurai Sanctuary, Anamalai Sanctuary and Mudumalai Sanctuary.
6. The population of red Porcupine in Kalakad Valliyur Forests is estimated to be between 40 and 50.

WILDLIFE WARDEN,
MUDUMALAI SANCTUARY,
TEMPLETON COTTAGE, VANNARPET,
UDHAGAMANDALAM 643 001,
NILGIRIS, TAMIL NADU,
October 25, 1982.

J. MANGALRAJ JOHNSON

6. BIRDS FEEDING ON FIRE-DRIVEN INSECTS

In the Sauraha area of Nepal's Chitwan National Park, permitted burning and harvesting of Elephant grass by local inhabitants took place daily from 25th January to 3rd February 1981, when we were birdwatching in this area.

On many occasions we came across groups of Black Drongos (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), feeding on insects driven upwards by the advancing flames. Aerial prey capture appeared to be extremely easy, even amidst thick rising smoke — the birds usually returning to grass-

stem perches before another foray above the fire.

Ali and Ripley (1968-1974), mention this behaviour in their account of Black Drongo feeding habits. However, on 31st January we observed 4 Ashy Drongos (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*), and 30+ Ashy Wood-Swallows (*Artamus fuscus*), feeding in a similar manner with c. 50 Black Drongos. The Wood-Swallows usually fed at a greater height than

the Drongos, and were never seen to land. In addition, 3 Black-shouldered Kites (*Elanus caeruleus*), fed low over the same area, also in close association with the fire-front, and were thought to be looking for fleeing small terrestrial prey.

In view of the large number of insects driven out of such an area it is perhaps surprising that no more species were seen capitalizing on this rich food supply.

CALF OF MAN BIRD OBSERVATORY,
ISLE OF MAN, U.K.

ADRIAN DEL-NEVO

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SOUTH PARKS RD., OXFORD., U.K.,
April 14, 1982.

PETER J. EWINS

REFERENCE

ALI, S. & RIPLEY, S. D. (1968-1974): Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. 10 Vols. Oxford University Press. Bombay.

7. OCCURRENCE OF THE GREAT CRESTED GREBE, *PODICEPS CRISTATUS* (LINNE) AT RANCHI, BIHAR

In November last Mrs. Marie Palit who lives at Ranchi, Bihar, wrote to me about some water birds which had over the last few years started visiting the water-supply lakes nearby. They occurred in large numbers over 300 at a time. Mrs. Palit said that they resembled a large grebe a picture of which she sent me from an American magazine and I suggested that it may be the Great Crested Grebe, *Podiceps cristatus* (Linné) of which the nearest record appeared to be one(?) seen by Mr. Horace Alexander (INDIAN HANDBOOK 1 p. 3) at Puri, Orissa.

In the meantime, my wife visited Ranchi and Mrs. Palit took her down to one of the lakes and they saw 40-50 birds in the distance.

The lake was clear of weeds. Later Mrs. Palit sent in pieces of two specimens which are no doubt of this species. I wrote to Mr. Alexander for more information but though he remembered that he saw it in December 1946 in Orissa he did not recollect whether this was on salt or fresh water but the fact that he wrote to Sálím Ali must mean, he said, that it was a relatively exciting record. He wrote again saying he had found his notebook which referred to 40-50 birds at Puri Lake on 25 December 1946 and again an uncounted number seen on 1st January 1947.

This species is accepted as a winter visitor entering from the north-west, extending as far south as Gujarat in the west and eastwards